



The Military Family Living in Europe with a High OPTEMPO Environment: Report I

Walter Reed Army Institute of Research
Washington, DC



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 - Deployments
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Summary of Key Findings (1 of 3)

- Findings are based on surveys (n= 78) and interviews (n= 50) with U.S. Army spouses living in Europe.
- The findings indicate that spouses are generally in good health.
- The focus of this brief is on the four unique demands of Army life described by Segal in 1988. These include: geographic mobility, residence in a foreign country, fear of soldier injury or death, and deployments and separations.

Geographic Mobility

- On average, the spouses reported living in Europe for 21 months.
- Sixty-four percent of spouses reported that the sponsorship program in Europe does not function well.
- Spouses who moved more reported better health, greater satisfaction with the Army, and wanted their soldier to remain in the Army. However, most spouses reported moving only two or fewer times.
- Those spouses who had a better perception of moving had better physical and psychological health and greater satisfaction with the Army.
- Having a worse perception of moving was associated with the spouses being more likely to want the soldier to leave the Army than to remain.



Summary of Key Findings (2 of 3)

Residence in a Foreign Country (Living Overseas)

- Most spouses liked living in Europe but many reported that they were anxious to go back to the States.
- Spouses with a better perception of living in Europe had better psychological health and greater satisfaction with the Army.

Fear of Soldier Injury or Death

- While eighty-four percent of spouses felt that their soldier was well trained to handle the dangers of deployment, seventy-eight percent worried about their soldier being injured on a deployment and fifty-six percent worried about their soldier being killed.
- Increased fears regarding injury and death were associated with poorer health, less satisfaction with the Army and wanting the soldier to leave the Army.
- Despite these fears, the majority were not prepared in terms of having wills or powers of attorney.



Summary of Key Findings (3 of 3)

Deployments

- Those spouses who were better able to handle deployments had less depression, better well-being, and greater satisfaction with the Army.
- However, the spouses' ability to handle deployments was not related to their retention preferences.

Separations

- Spouses who felt less independence and more negative emotions during and following separations reported more psychological and physical symptoms as well as less satisfaction with the Army.
- Spouses who felt less independence were more likely to want their soldier to leave the Army than to remain. However, emotions were not significantly related to retention preference.



Study Objectives

- Determine how OPTEMPO impacts the health and well-being of the family as well as soldier retention and readiness.
- Determine the social and psychological factors that promote family health and well-being when living outside the United States in a high OPTEMPO environment.
- Standardize and validate unique assessment tools that measure family health and well-being, to include the following scales:

Soldier Commitment
Living in Europe
Deployments
Fear of Injury or Death

Moving
Quality of Life in Europe
Separations
Army Support



OPTEMPO Family Research Model

Predictors

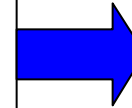
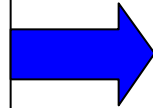
Demographics
Geographic Mobility
**Residence in a
Foreign Country**
**Fear of Soldier
Injury/Death**
Deployments/Separations

Moderators/ Mediators

Employment Status
Social Support
**Soldier Commitment
to Family**
**Work/Family and
Family/Work
Conflict**

Outcomes

Health and Well-being
Satisfaction with Army
**Spouses' Retention
Preference**





Research Design

- **Sample** - Spouses from the 10 companies (4 Division, 2 Corps, 4 Echelon above Corps) in the USAMRU-E USAREUR OPTEMPO soldier study.

- **Study Design**

Year 1:

- Pre-tested the survey
- Administered the survey
- Interviewed persons across enlisted, non-commissioned officer, and officer ranks from the following categories: 1) civilian spouses, 2) military spouses, 3) spouses with Exceptional Family Member Program, and 4) single parents.

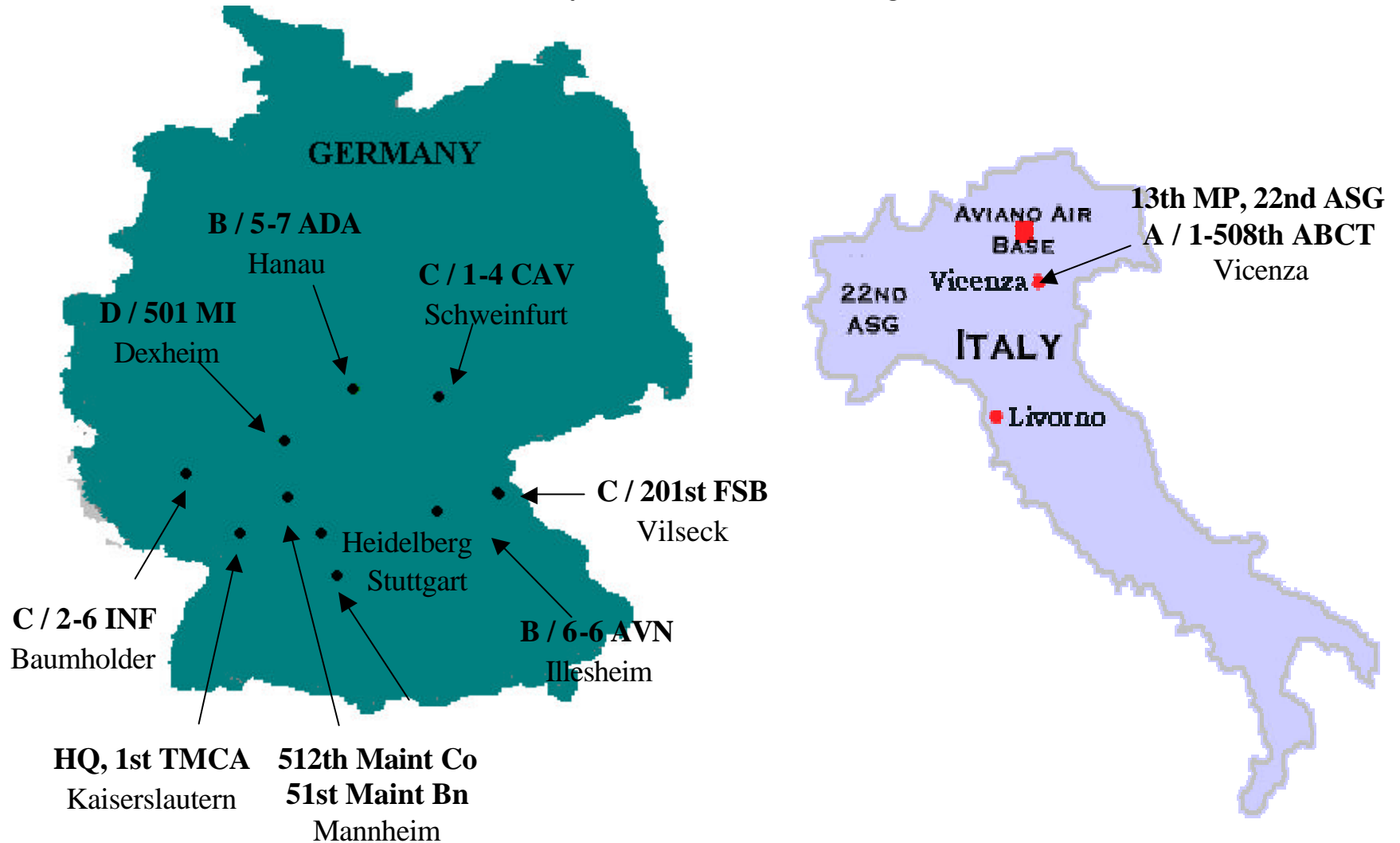
Year 2:

- Survey spouses who participated in year 1 as well as spouses newly arrived in-country
- Interview spouses interviewed in year 1 as well as spouses newly arrived in-country



Location of Families

The 10 units in this study are located throughout USAREUR.





Sample: Survey and Interviews

Survey Sample

January 2001- 361 surveys sent out to spouses in 10 companies
- 57 surveys undelivered, incomplete

304 surveys delivered

78 surveys completed (26% response rate)

Interview Sample: Analysis in Progress

April-June 2001- 50 interviews conducted

12 EFMP

6 Single Parents

7 Dual Military

25 Civilian Spouses



Demographics

- On average, spouses in this sample were older and more educated than the Army average.

Gender: Female 97% (n= 76)
Male- 3% (n= 2)

Average age: 29 years

Average number of years married: 6 (n= 78)

Ethnicity/race: White-76% (n= 56)
Hispanic-10% (n= 7)
African-American 8% (n= 6)
Asian-5% (n= 4)
Other 1% (n= 1)

Education: 5% less than high school (n= 4)
16% GED or high school graduate (n= 12)
68% college or technical training or college graduate (n= 51)
11% graduate training or graduate degree (n= 8)

Military Brat: 20% (n= 15) **Percent with children:** 72% (n = 56)



Categories of Survey Measures

Personal Characteristics

Employment
Social Support
Health-related Behaviors
Psychological Health and Well-being*
Physical Health Symptoms*

Family Characteristics

Marital Satisfaction
Children
Finances
Soldier Commitment to Family
Work/family; Family/work conflict

Characteristics of Army Life

Geographic Mobility*
Residence in a Foreign Country*
Separations/deployments*
Risk of injury/death of Soldier*
Spouse Satisfaction with the Army*
Retention Preferences*

***Indicates measures that will be the focus of the presentation**



Well-being and Depression

- Spouses were in general good health.

- Spouses did not experience a great deal of depression.

General Health Questionnaire Sample Scale Items

- Been able to concentrate
- Been able to enjoy your day to day activities
- Been able to face up to your problems
- Felt that you are playing a useful part in things
- Felt capable of making decisions

- Scale: 1(not at all)-4(much more than usual)
- Mean= 32.2; Median=32.5
- Score range: 12-48 (high is good)

Centers for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale Sample Scale Items

- Had trouble getting to or staying asleep
- Felt sad
- Felt lonely
- Felt you couldn't get going
- Felt everything was an effort

- Scale: 0-7 days
- Mean= 10.8; Median= 8.0
- Score range: 0-49 (low is good)



Psychological and Physical Health

- Spouses reported minimal general distress.

- Spouses reported few physical symptoms.

Brief Symptom Inventory 18 Sample Scale Items

- Feeling tense or keyed up
- Feeling lonely
- Feeling blue
- Feeling no interest in things
- Nervousness or shakiness

- Scale: 1= (none)-5 (extreme)
- Mean= 27.4; Median= 25.0
- Score range: 18-90 (low is good)

Physical Symptom Checklist Sample Scale Items

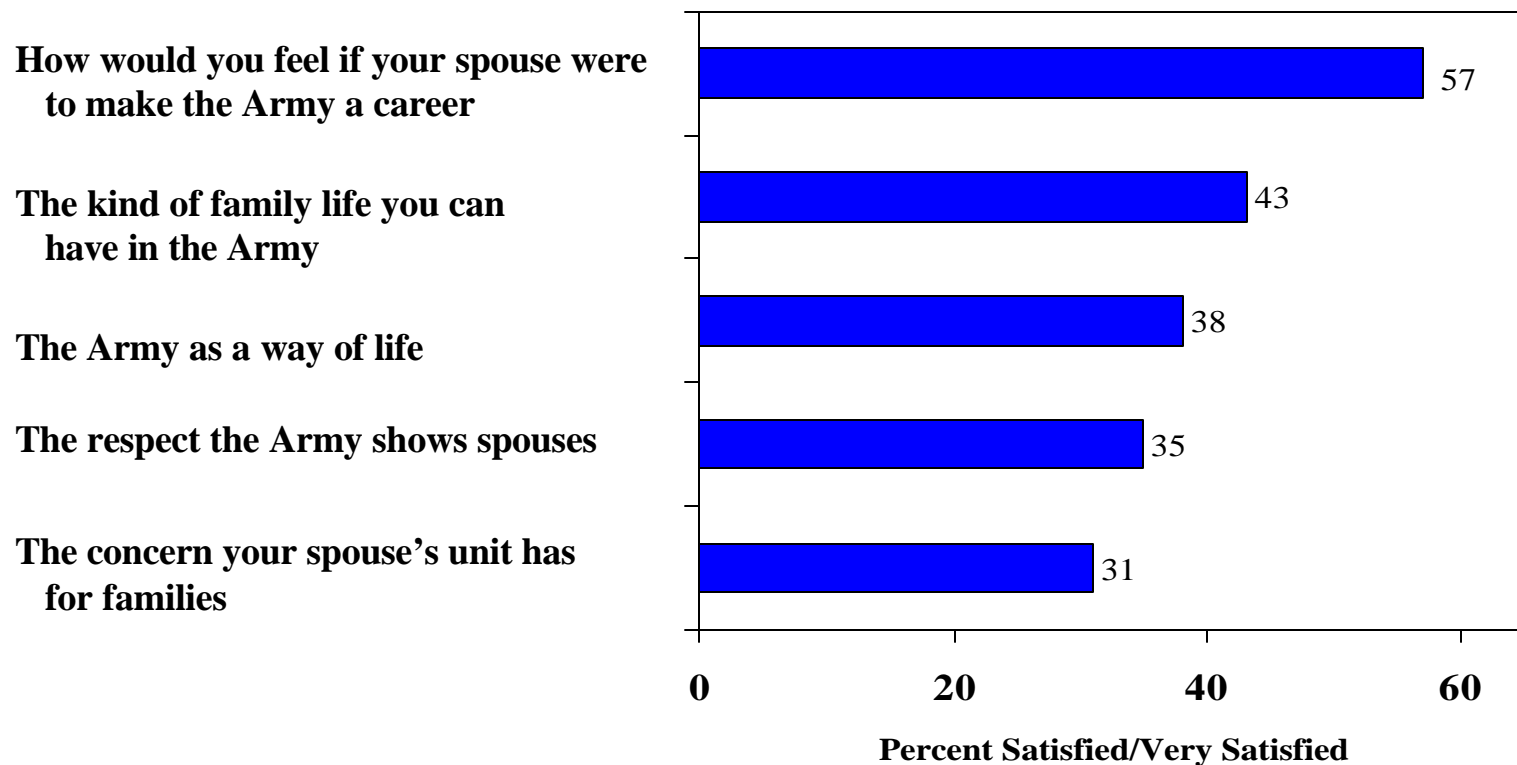
- Headaches
- Back problems
- Weight loss/gain
- Cough
- Muscle aches or cramps

- Scale 1-5 where 1 = no symptoms experienced at all during the past month and 5 = symptoms that were experienced very often
- Mean = 41.3; Median = 39.5
- Score range: 22-110 (low is good)



Satisfaction with the Army

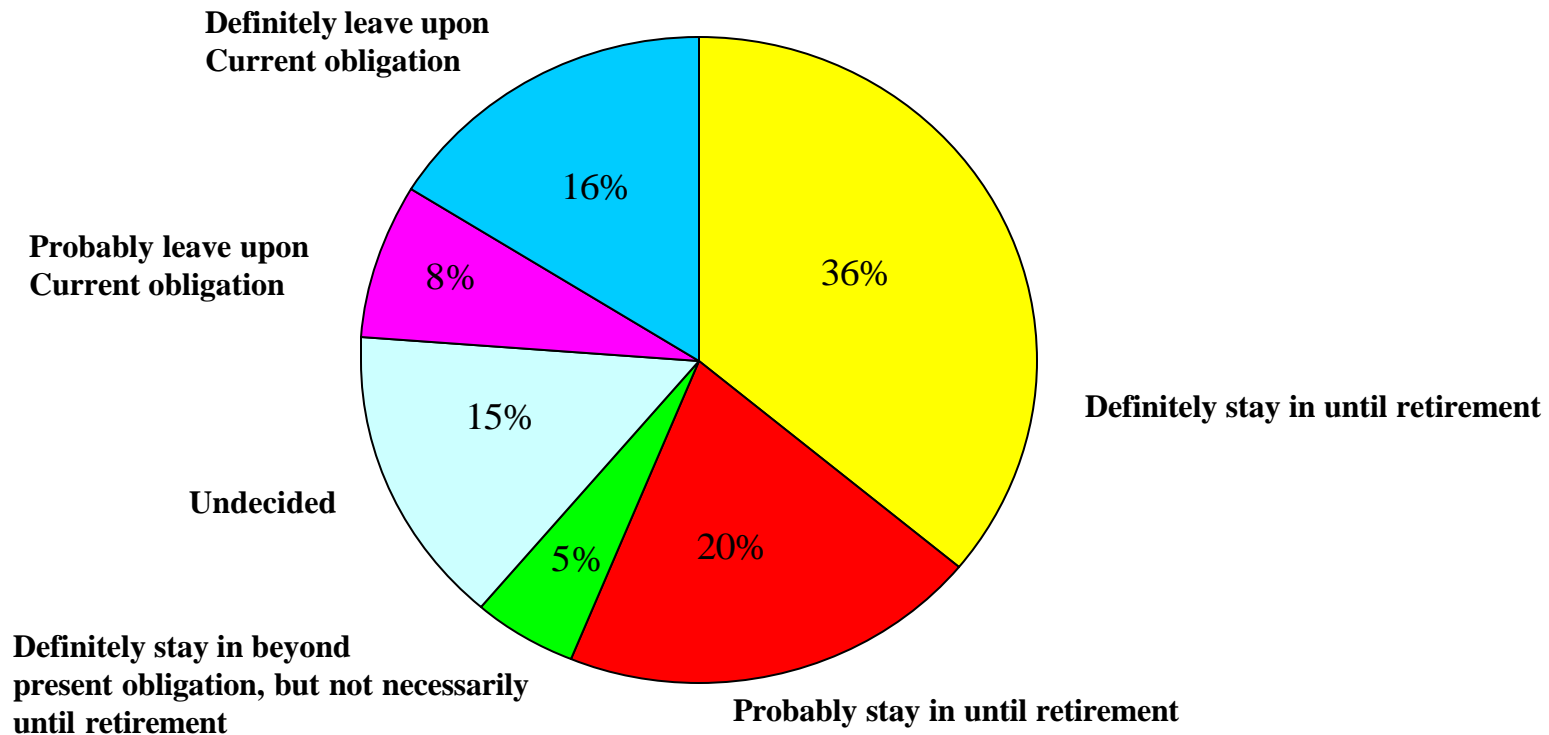
- Most spouses reported that they would be satisfied if their soldier made the Army a career.
- However, most spouses were not satisfied with the respect and concern that the Army shows for them.





Retention Preference

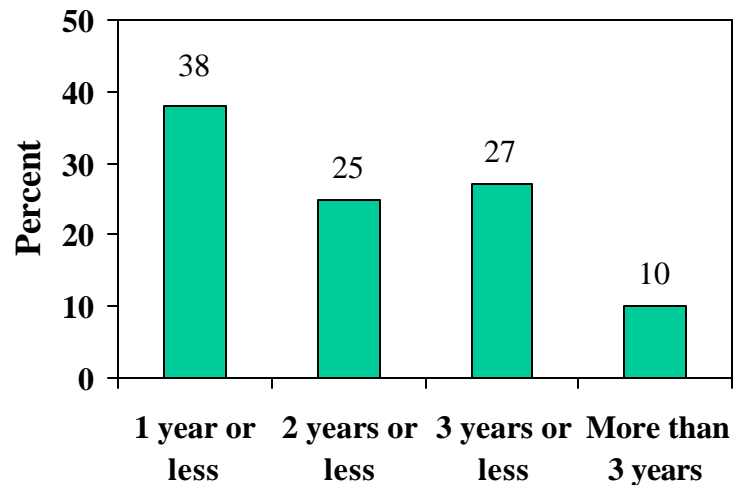
- Almost two-thirds (61%) of spouses want their soldiers to remain in the Army at least beyond their present obligation.
- Only 24% of spouses wanted their soldier to leave the Army.





Geographic Mobility

- On average spouses have lived in Europe for 21 months which approximates the average length of time spouses have lived in one place (22 months).
- Spouses have moved an average of three times since their soldier has been in the Army, and the average number of moves to overseas locations has been two times.



- Graph indicates the percent of spouses who have lived in one location per number of years.



Geographic Mobility

- The majority of spouses did not feel like their move to Europe was a positive experience and cite general difficulties with the moving process.
- Although moving is viewed as a benefit to being in the military, almost one third report they move more than they prefer to.

Moving has made it difficult to find a good job

One of the benefits of being a military spouse is getting to move

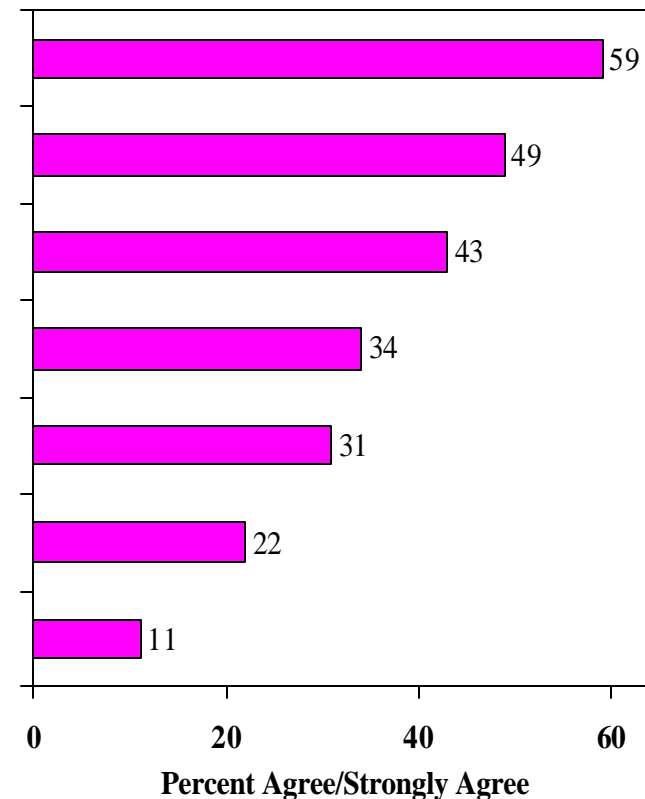
Moving is difficult on our children

Our arrival in Europe was a pleasant experience

We move more frequently than I would like

Moving has had a positive impact on my family

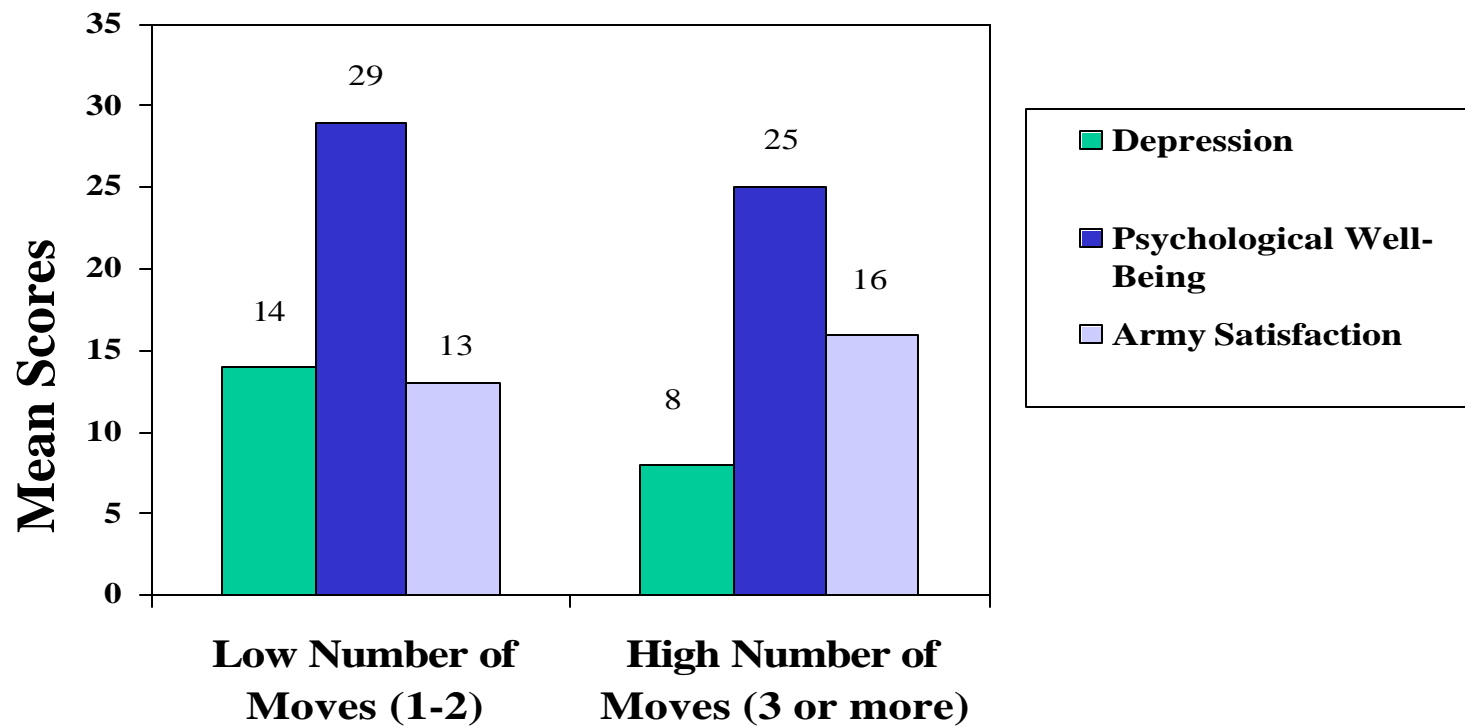
The sponsorship program in Europe functions well





Number of Moves: Health and Army Satisfaction

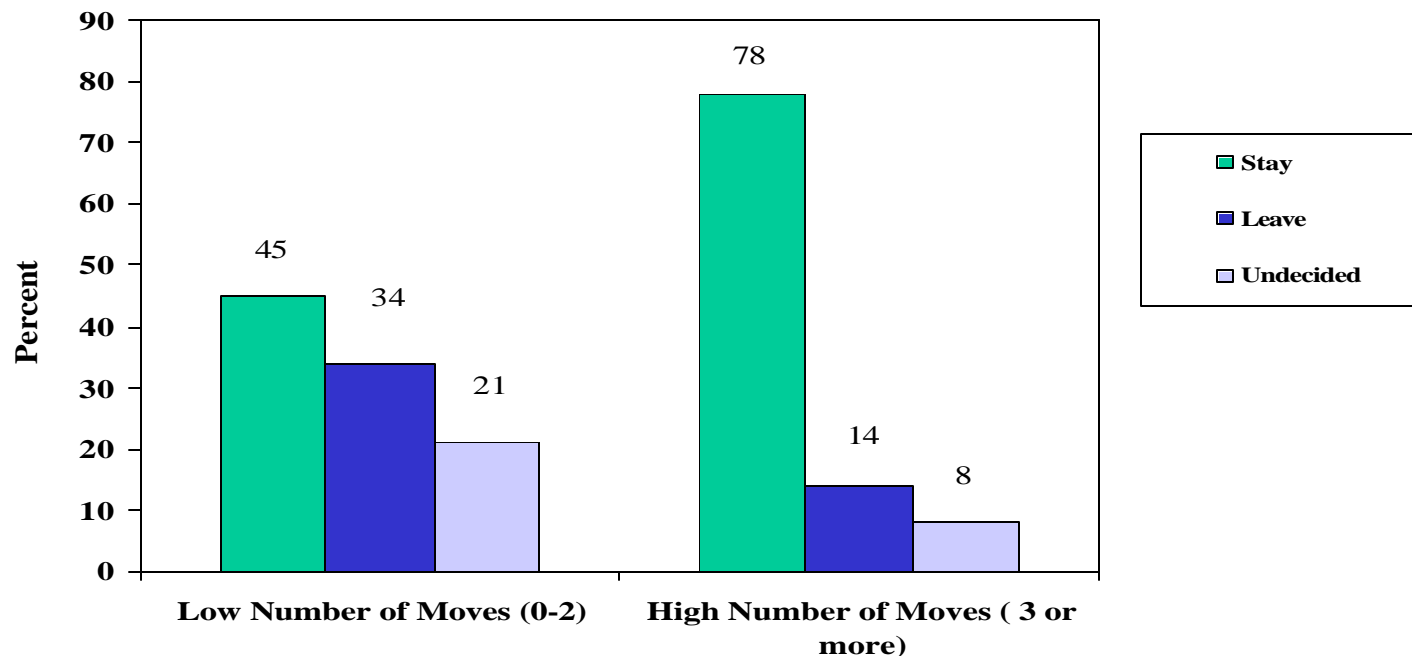
- In general, spouses with three or more moves reported higher psychological well-being, higher satisfaction with the Army and fewer depression symptoms (Median splits: (t 's >2.08 , $df \leq 76$, p 's $<.05$).
- However, spouses with three or more moves were more likely to be older and their spouse to have been in the Army longer.





Number of Moves: Retention

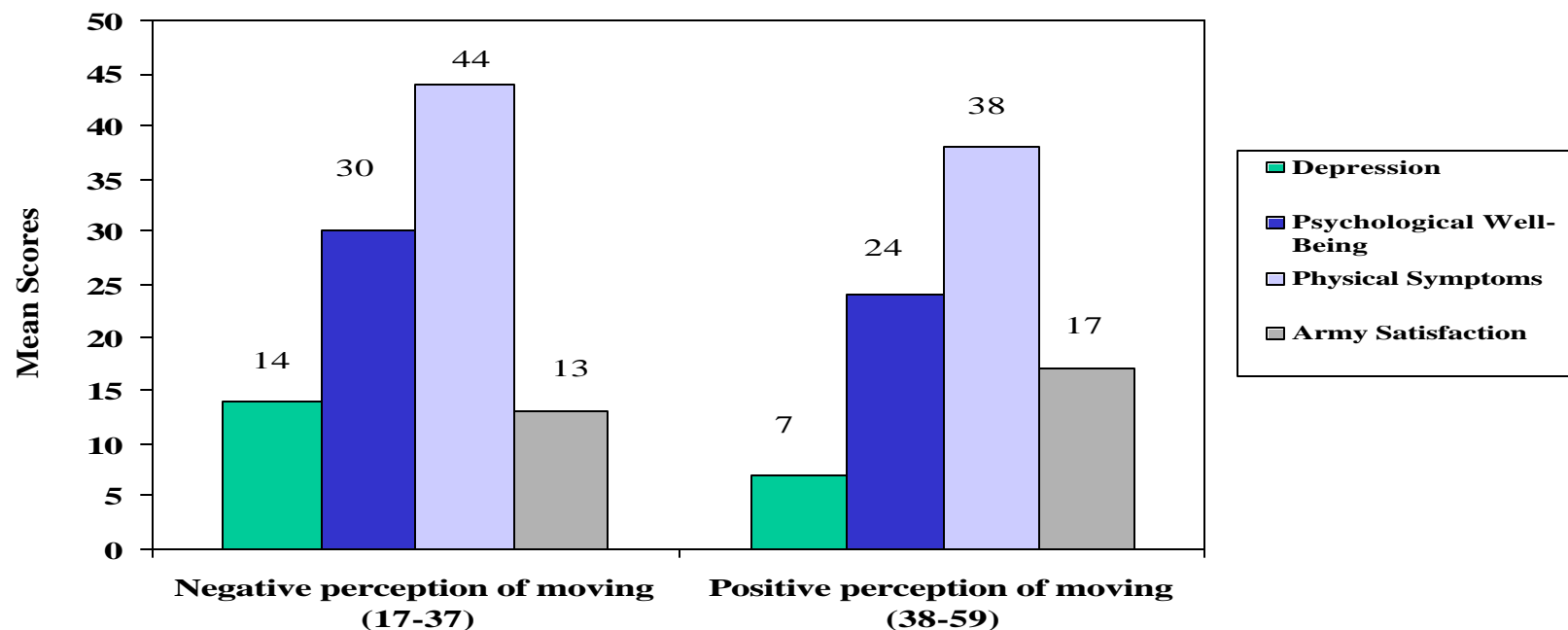
- Overall, spouses with more moves were more likely to want their soldier to remain in the Army than those with fewer moves. ($\chi^2 = (2, n=75)=8.95, p = .01$). However, those with more moves will generally have been in service longer.





Geographic Mobility: Health and Army Satisfaction

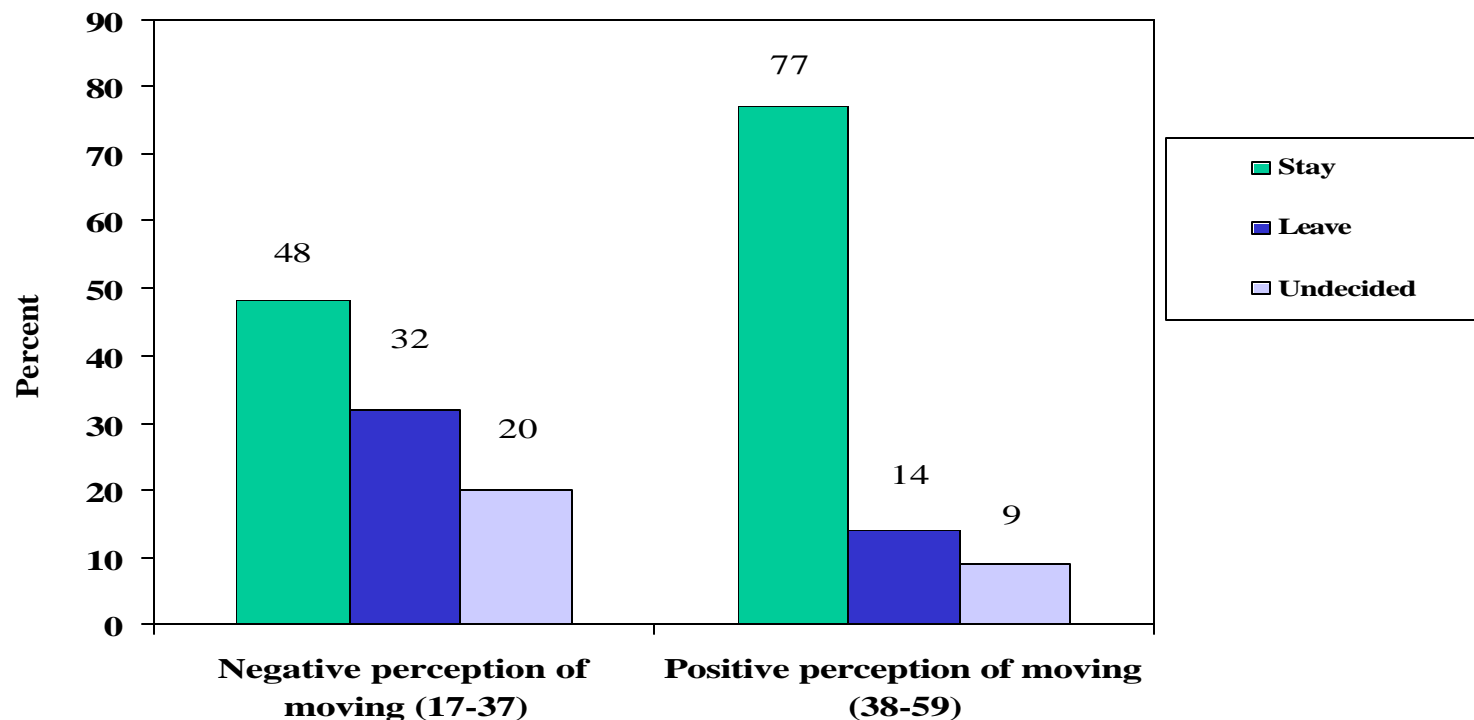
- Spouses perceptions towards moving is related to their health and Army satisfaction.
- Spouses with positive perceptions of moving reported less depression symptoms, better psychological well-being, fewer physical health symptoms and higher Army satisfaction Median splits: (t 's > 2.48 , $df \leq 76$, p 's $< .02$).





Geographic Mobility: Retention

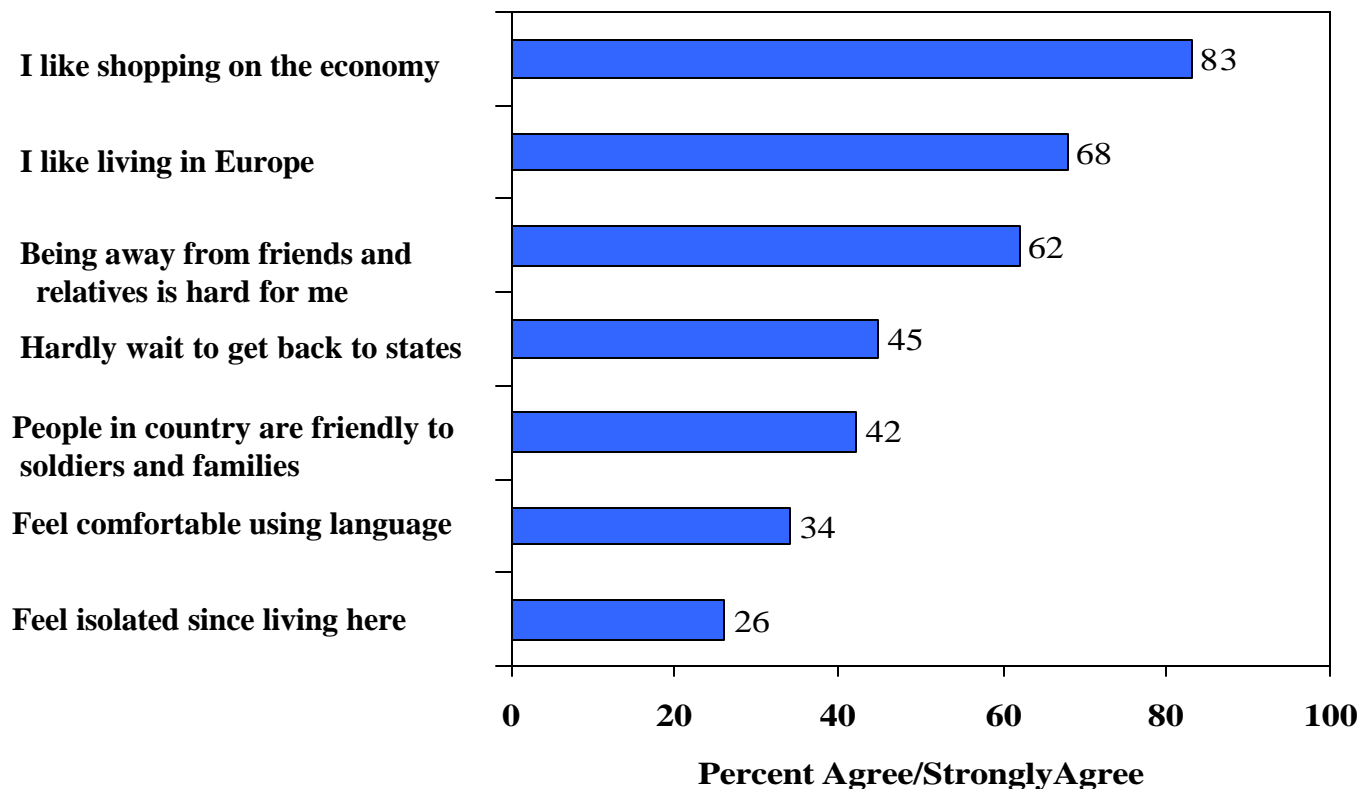
- Spouses perception of moving was related to their attitudes toward their soldier remaining in the military.
- Spouses with positive perceptions of moving were more likely to want their soldier to remain in the Army than those with negative perceptions of the Army. ($X^2 = (2, n = 75) = 6.92, p = .03$)





Living Overseas

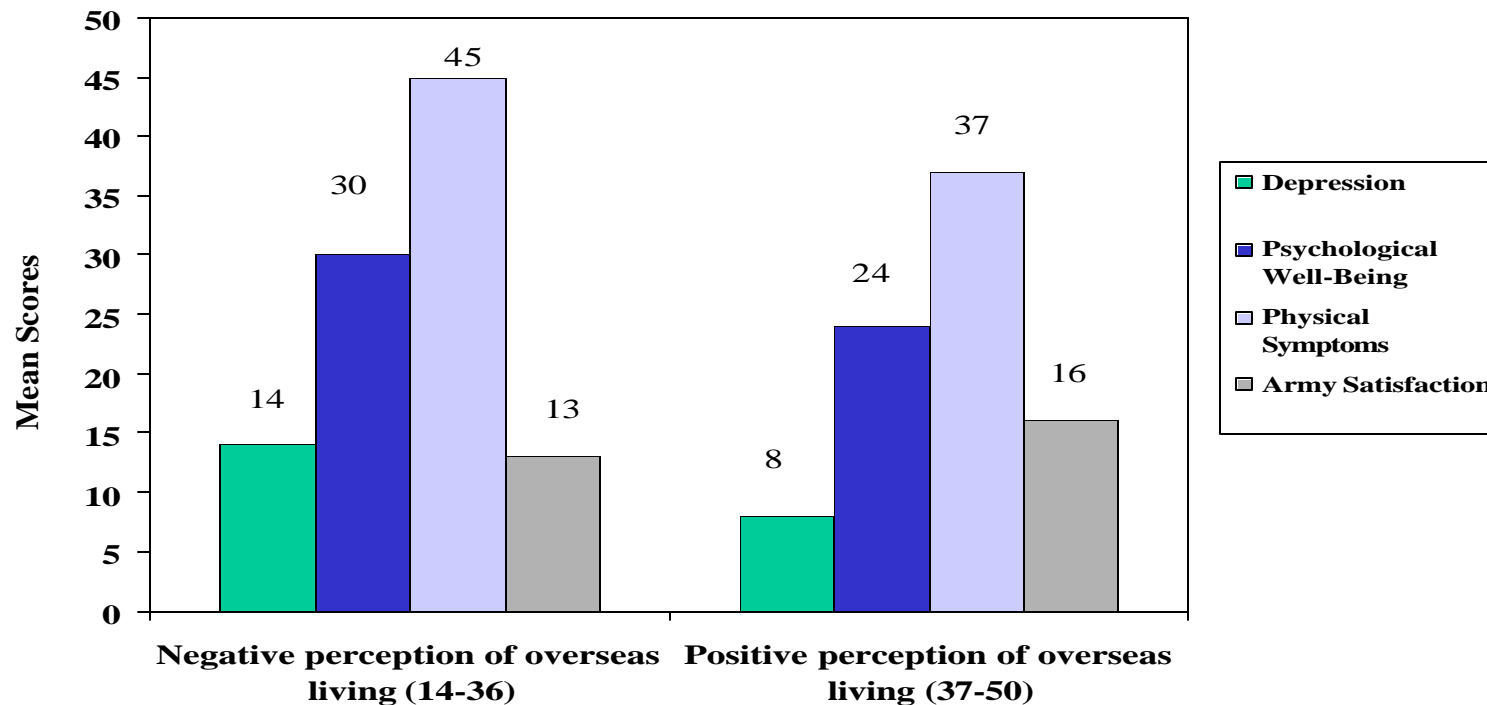
- A high majority of spouses liked living in Europe; however, they missed friends and relatives and were anxious to get back to the states.





Living Overseas: Health and Army Satisfaction

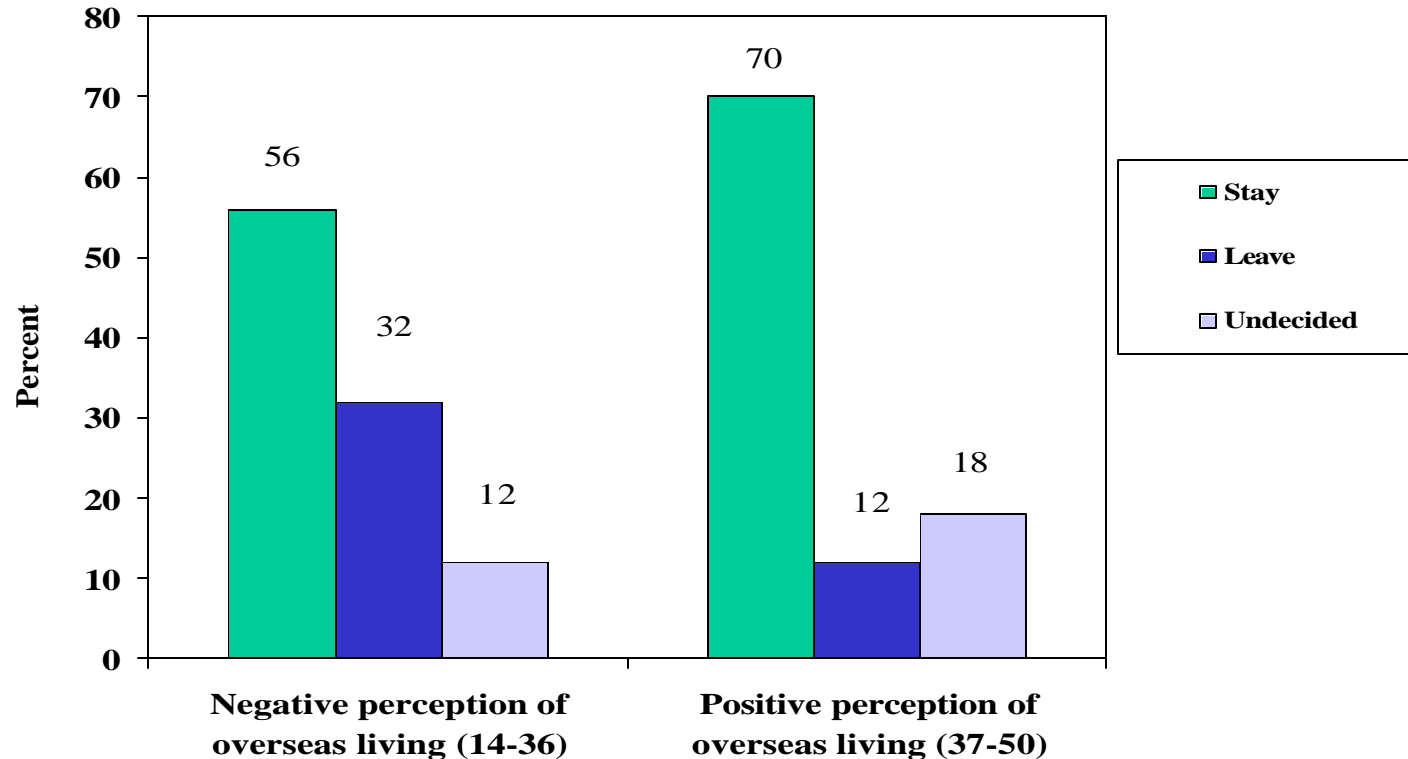
- Spouses with positive perceptions of living overseas reported fewer depression symptoms, fewer psychological and physical health symptoms, and were more satisfied with the Army (Median splits: (t 's >2.38 , $df \leq 75$, p 's $<.02$).





Living Overseas: Retention

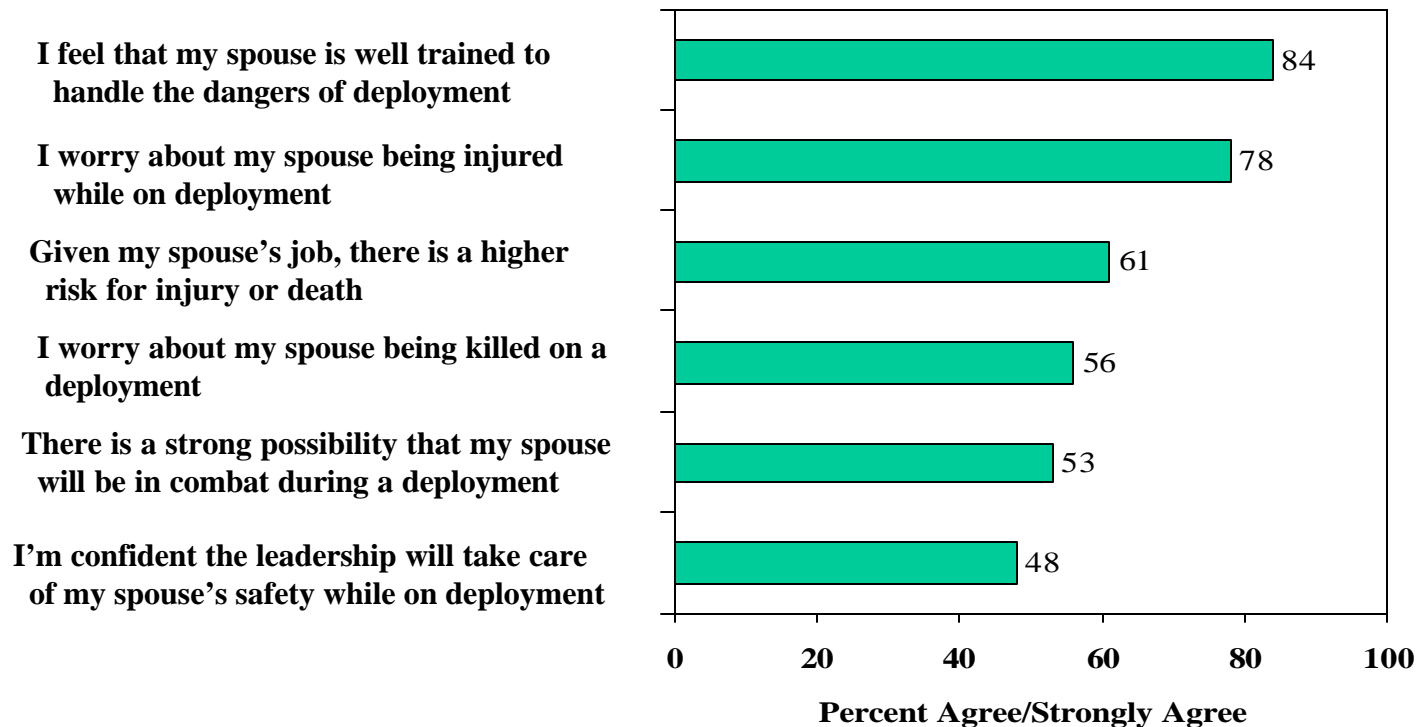
- Spouses with positive perceptions of living overseas were no more likely to want their soldier to remain in the Army than those with negative perceptions of living overseas. ($X^2 = (2, n = 74) = 4.04, p = .13$)





Fear of Soldier Injury or Death

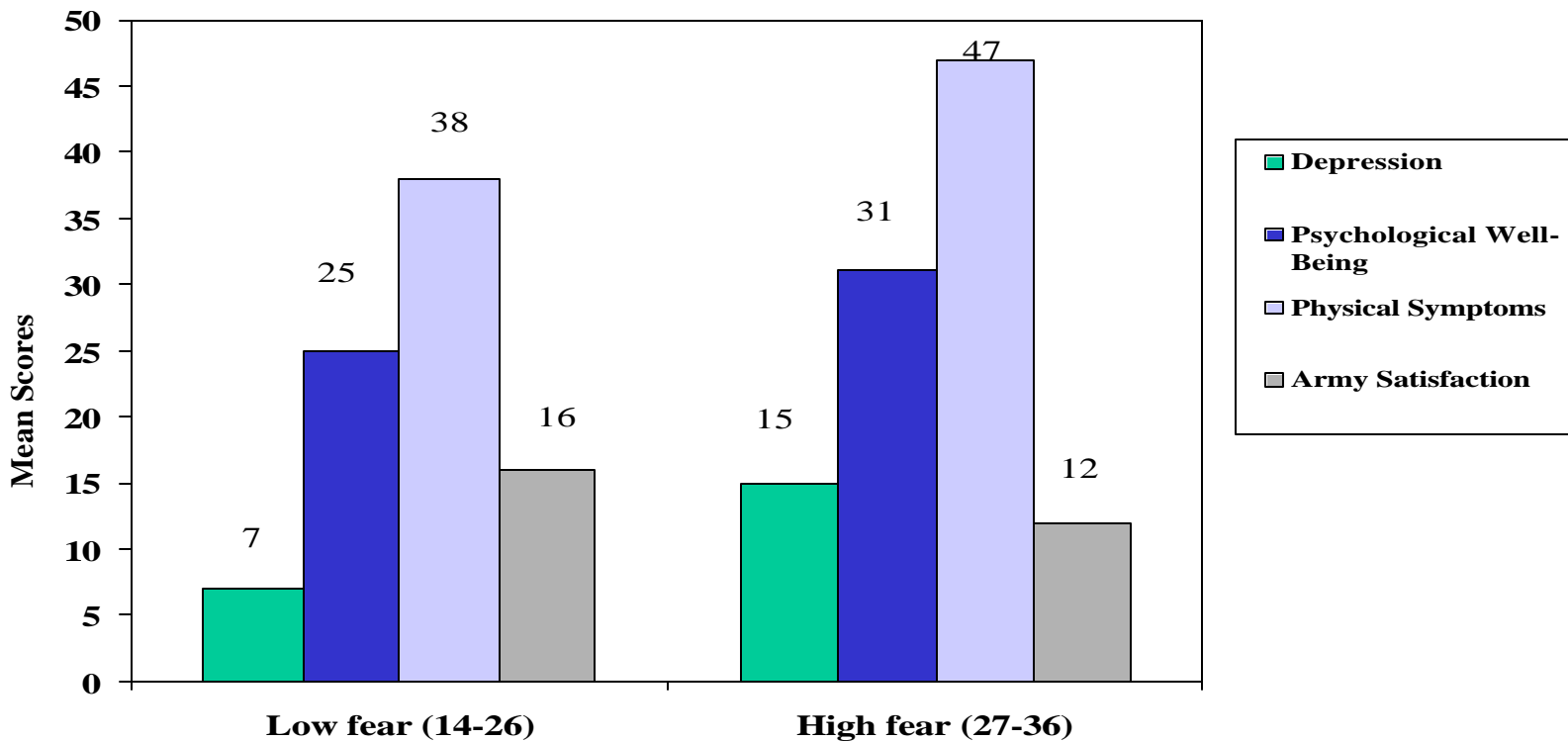
- Although the majority of spouses felt that their soldiers were well trained to handle the dangers of deployment, many still feared that their soldier might be injured or killed on a deployment.
- Less than half of the spouses had confidence that the leadership would take care of their soldier's safety while on deployment.





Fear of Soldier Injury/Death: Health and Army Satisfaction

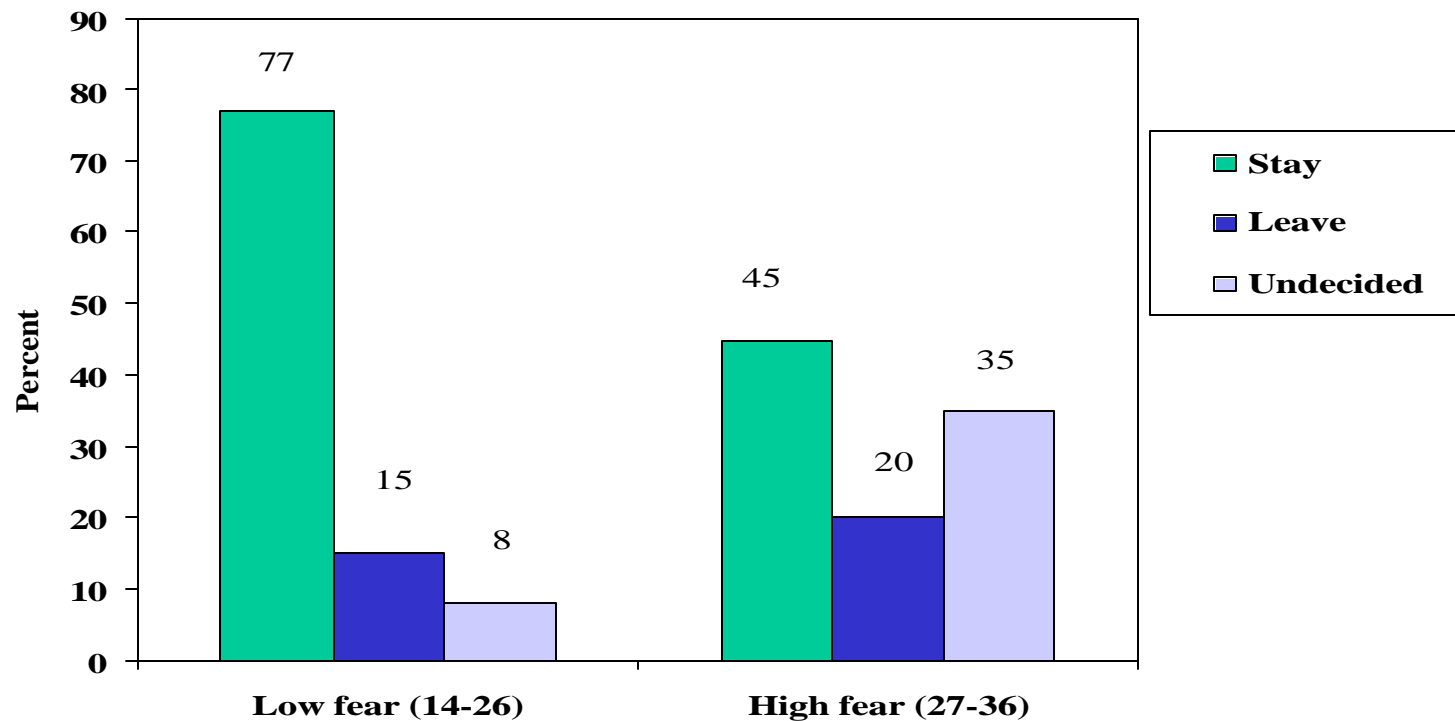
- Spouses with higher fear levels were more depressed, had more psychiatric symptoms, had more physical symptoms and were less satisfied with the Army (Median splits: (t 's >3.23 , $df \leq 69$, p 's $< .002$).





Fear of Soldier Injury/Death: Retention

- Spouses with lower fear levels were more likely to want their soldier to remain in the Army than those with higher fear levels ($X^2=(2, n=68)= 7.41$, $p= .025$).





Fear of Soldier Injury or Death Readiness

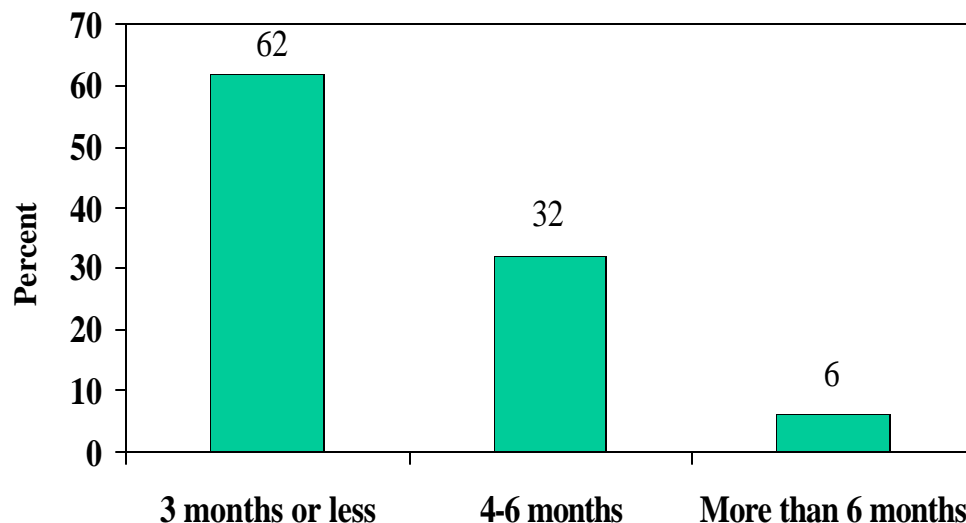
- Most spouses and soldiers did not have the legal documents needed in case of injury or death.
- Only 40% of spouses reported that they have a general power of attorney.
- However, approximately two-thirds (64%) of the spouses reported that their soldier had a will.

	Both my spouse and I have (%)	I have (%)	My spouse has (%)	Neither my spouse nor I have (%)
General Power of Attorney	19	21	46	14
Medical Power of Attorney	12	4	4	80
Will	30	2	34	34
Living Will (Advanced Directive)	14	4	4	78



Training and Deployments

- On average, spouses reported that in the last year their soldier had been gone for almost 3 months for either training or on deployment.
- Although 63% of spouses agreed that they received sufficient notice when their soldier was going on a training or field exercise only 42% agreed that they received sufficient notice when the soldier was leaving for a deployment and even fewer (31%) reported that they knew when the soldier would return from a deployment or training.

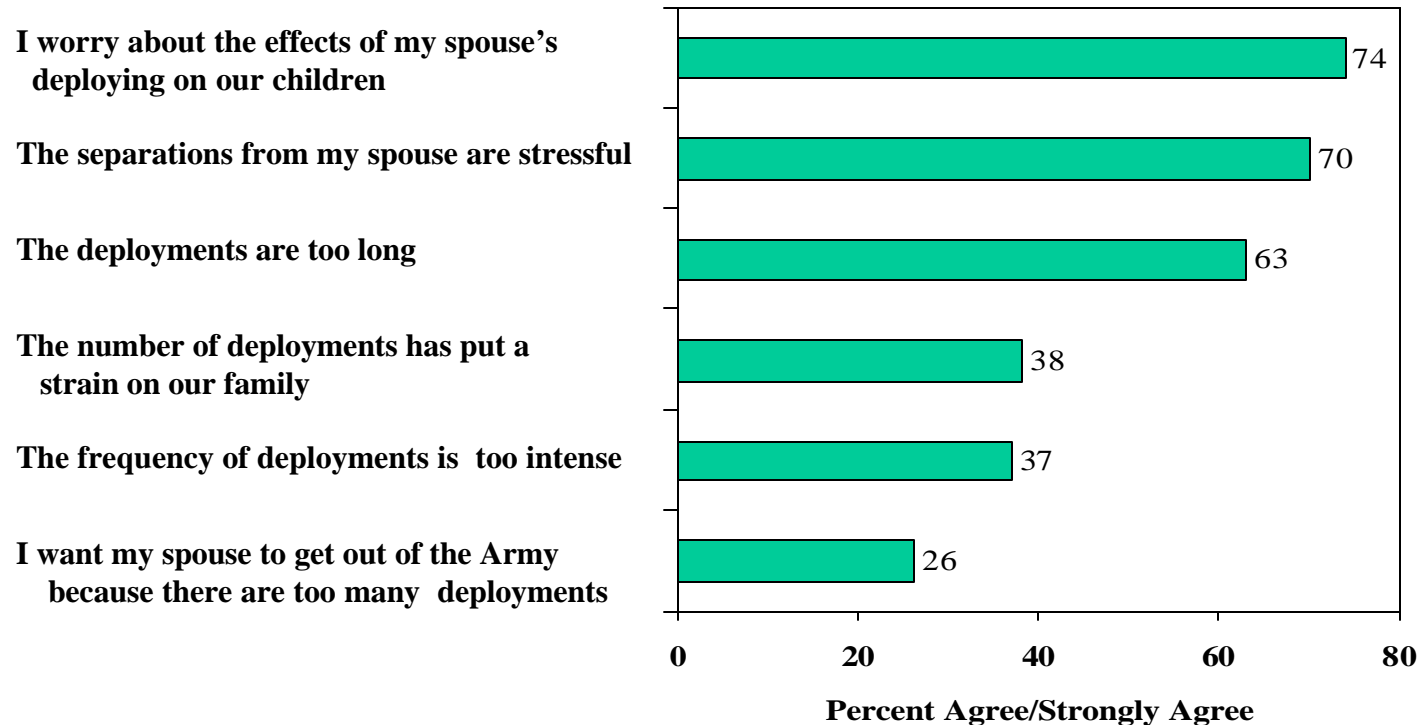


- Graph indicates the percent of soldiers who have gone for training or field exercises in the last year by months.



Deployments

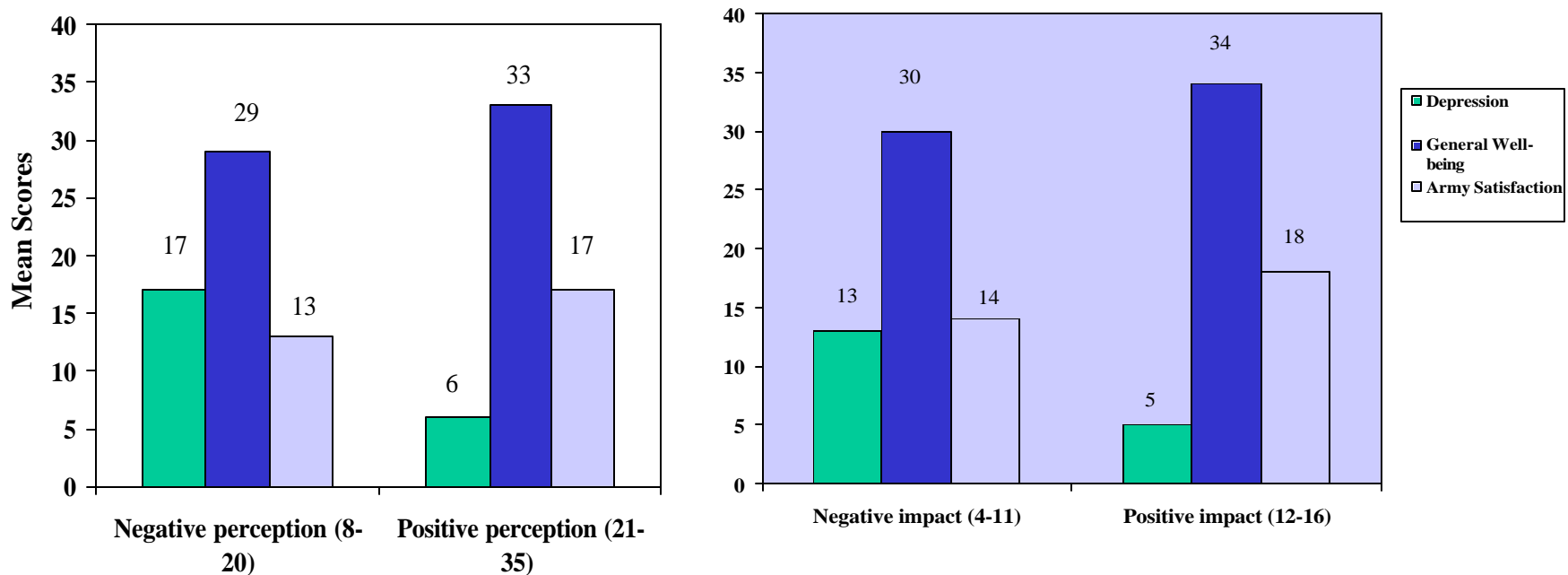
- Spouses feel that the separations from their soldier are stressful on the family, particularly the children.
- Spouses also report that deployments are too long, over a quarter (26%) report that this is a reason for them to leave the military.





Deployments: Health and Army Satisfaction

- Spouses with positive perceptions of deployments and who reported more positive impacts of the deployments reported fewer depression symptoms, had higher psychological well-being and were more satisfied with the Army (Median splits; (t 's > 2.42, $df \leq 42$, p 's < .02).

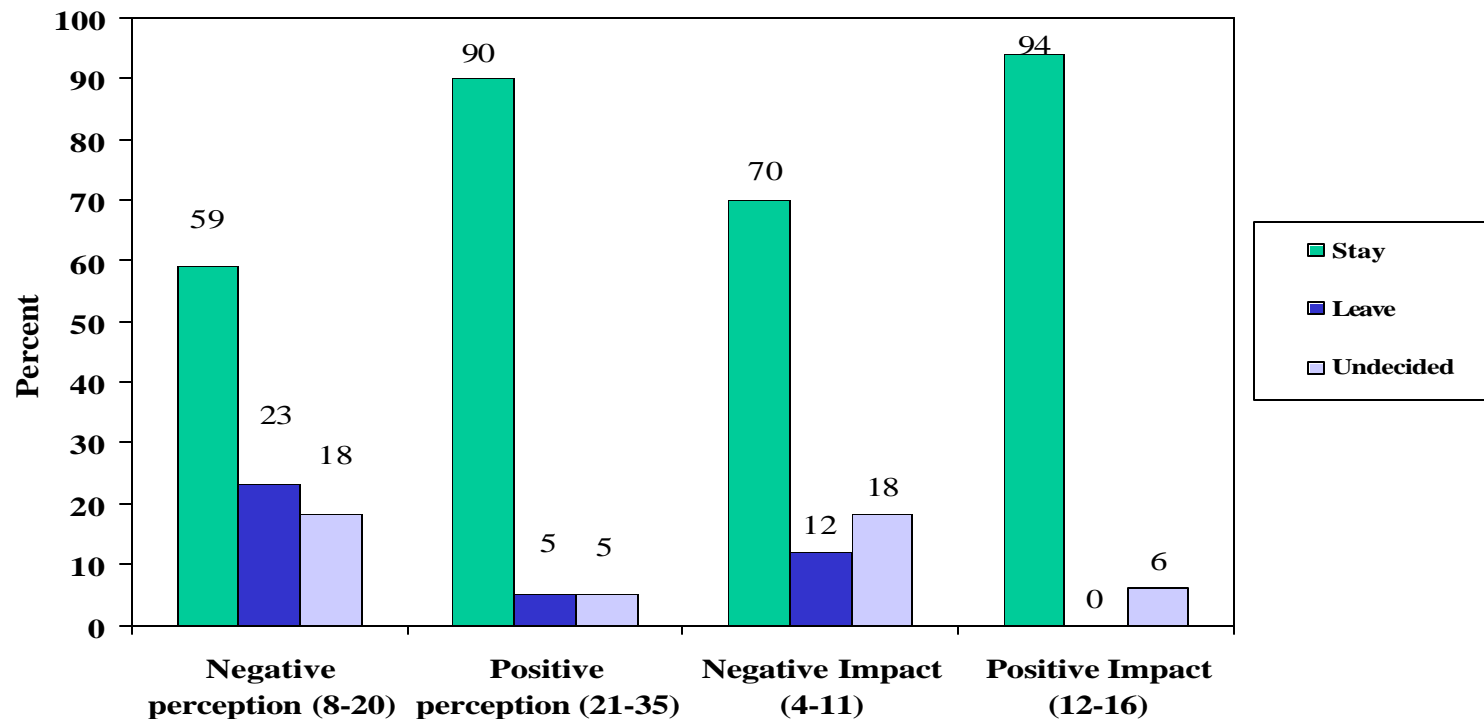


***Note:** Higher scores on the Well-being scale mean better well-being.



Deployments: Retention

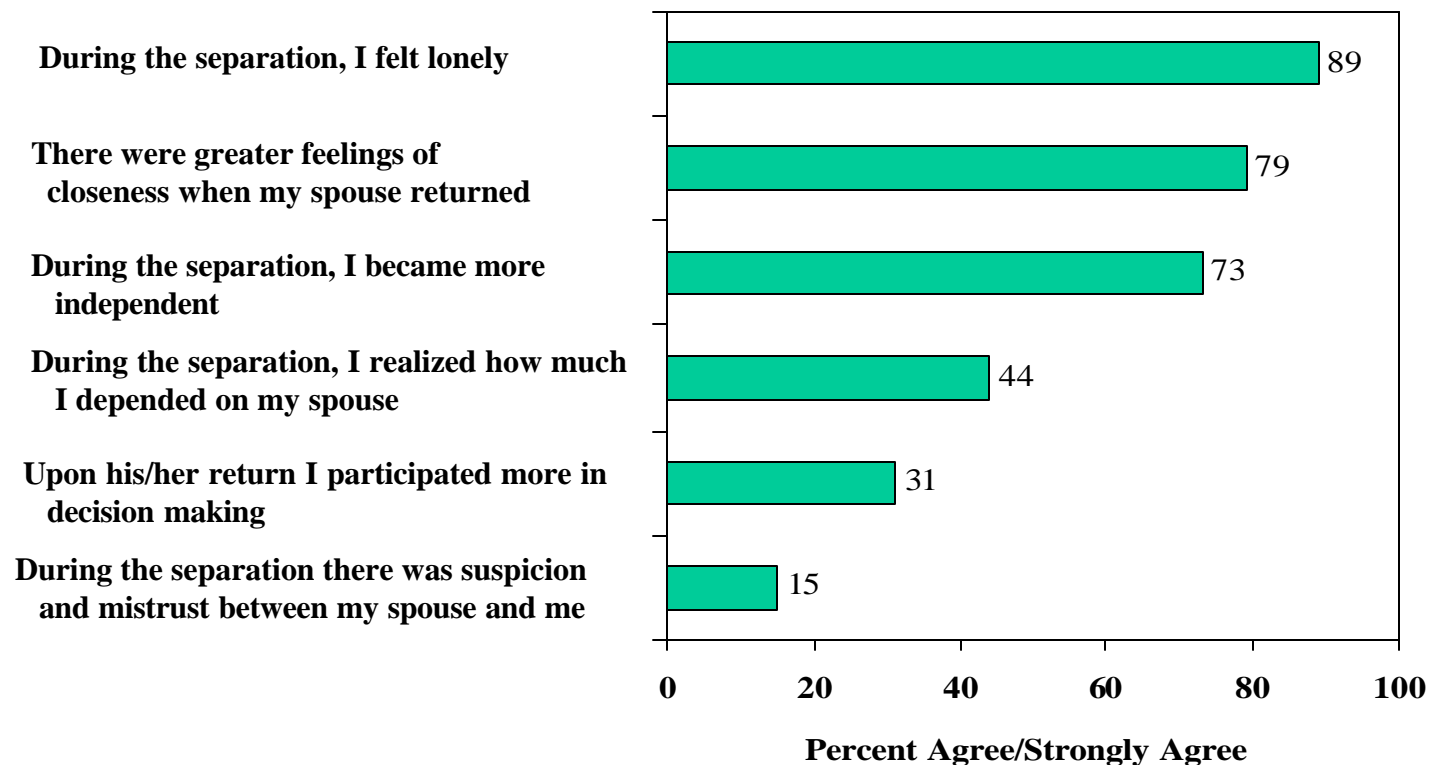
- Spouses who had positive perceptions of deployments and felt less impact were no more likely to want their soldier to stay in the Army compared to those spouses who reported negative perceptions and negative impacts ($\chi^2(2, n=43) \leq 5.57, p \leq .17$).





Separations

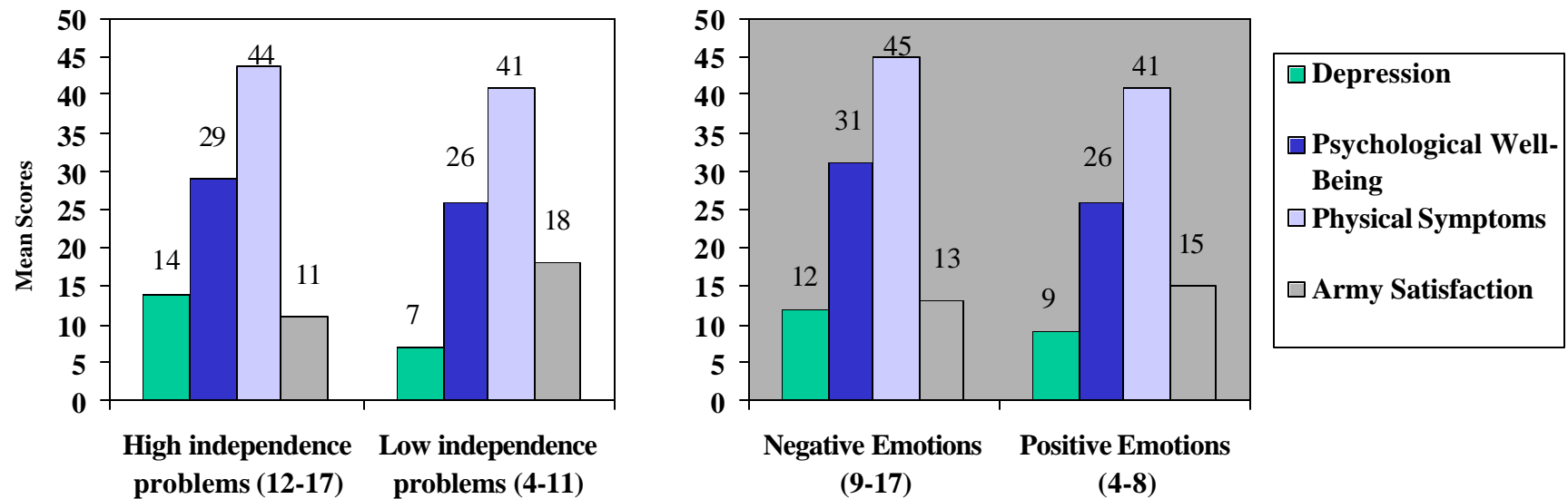
- Although many spouses felt lonely during separations due to training exercises and military deployments, many became more independent and experienced greater closeness after the separations.





Separations: Health and Army Satisfaction

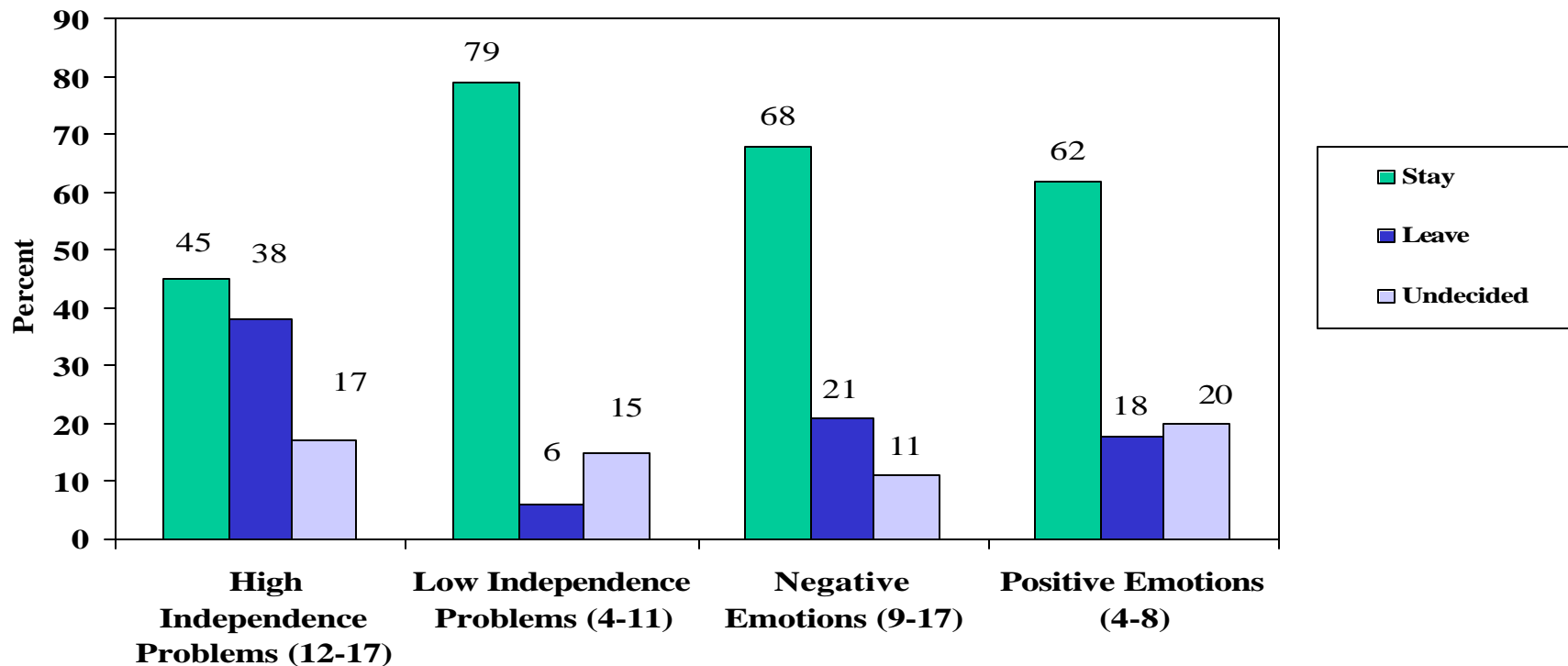
- Overall, spouses with fewer independence problems and higher positive emotions regarding military separations due to training and deployments reported fewer psychological and physical health symptoms and higher satisfaction with the Army (Median splits; t 's > 2.02 , $df \leq 63$, p 's $< .05$).





Separations: Retention

- Those spouses who felt more independence due to separations were more likely to want their soldier to stay in the Army than those who felt less independence. ($\chi^2 = (2, n = 63) = 10.80, p = .005$).
- Spouses with negative emotions were not significantly different from those with positive emotions with regard to retention preference.





Discussion

The findings presented here show that:

- The unique constellation of military family life style variables, moving, living overseas, military separations, and fears regarding soldier harm, are significantly associated with the spouses' health, satisfaction with the military, and their desire for their soldiers to remain in the military.

Future research will:

- Link spouse data to soldier data from the USAREUR OPTEMPO study to assess the role of the spouse in maintaining soldier readiness.
- Determine if family types (dual military, EFMP, single parents, or civilian spouse) differ in their influence on readiness.
- Assess the impact of spouse employment on family readiness.
- Include National Guard and Reserve family members.
- Seek to increase the sample size.

End State:

- Provide scientifically validated recommendations to the Army for improving family readiness in both CONUS and OCONUS environments for both active duty and reserves.



Points of Contact

Doris Briley Durand, Ph.D.

WRAIR

Washington, DC 20307-5100

Phone: DSN 285-9148

Commercial (301)319-9148

Fax: DSN 285-9484

Commercial (301) 319-9484

Email: doris.durand@na.amedd.army.mil

LTC Carl A. Castro, Ph.D.

WRAIR

Washington, DC 20307-5100

Phone: DSN 285-9174

Commercial (301) 319-9174

Fax: DSN: 285-9484

Commercial (301) 319-9484

Email: carl.castro@na.amedd.army.mil

Authors of Report: CPT Lolita Burrell, LTC Carl Castro and Dr. Doris Durand

USAMRUE-Staff: Ms. Valerie Frey and Dr. Kathleen Wright

WRAIR Staff: Dr. Gary Adams and Ms. Wanda Cook